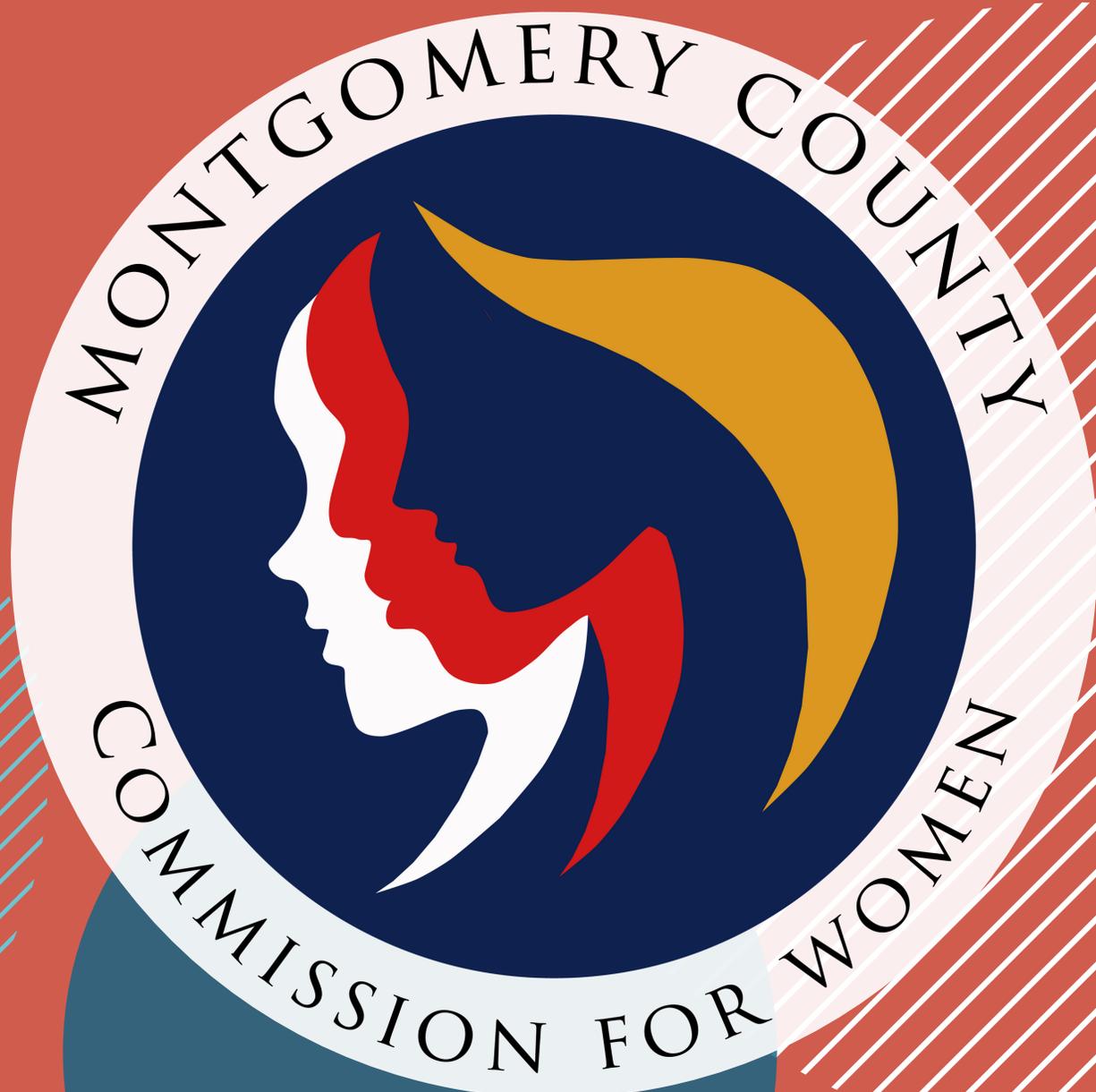


MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMISSION FOR WOMEN ANNUAL REPORT JULY 2019 - JUNE 2020

ADVANCING WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN
MONTGOMERY COUNTY SINCE 1972



ANNUAL REPORT FISCAL YEAR 2021

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CFW ROSTER

Nicole Y. Drew, Esq., President
Donna Rojas, First Vice President
Diana Rubin, Second Vice President
Tiffany Boiman, Secretary
Tazeen Ahmad
Isabel Argoti
Tonia Bui
Mona-Lee Belizaire
Ijeoma E. Enendu
Patricia (Patti) Maclay
Gulia C. Mcpherson
Adrienne Prentice
Patricia (Tricia) Swanson
Meredith Weisel
Angela Whitehead Quigley

TEAM MEMBERS:

Jodi Finkelstein, MSW, Executive Director
Dana Brunson, Events Coordinator
Lucy Font, University of Maryland School of Social Work Intern



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE NICOLE Y. DREW, ESQ.

As I continue my tenure as President of the Montgomery County Commission for Women, it gives me great pleasure to present this year's annual report to highlight our Commission's activities and accomplishments. This year has been one of celebration and renaissance.

Our Commission recommitted its focus on four priorities – Safety and Security for Women, Economic Empowerment, Women's Health, and Women in Leadership.

In January 2020, we celebrated our 40th anniversary of our annual signature event, the Women's Legislative Briefing (WLB). The WLB continues to grow in support by other women-focused advocates in the county and provides an opportunity to bring together more than 60 organizations in Montgomery County and other neighboring counties.

In February, our Policy and Legislative Committee led our strong advocacy at both the county and state levels to ensure that the women in Montgomery County achieve economic parity, increased leadership opportunities, and safety and security in their homes and communities. Our Commissioners continued to provide oral and written testimony on behalf of the Commission in support of legislation that aligned with our legislative agenda.

We also participated in key signature legislation at both the county and state levels, including support for the CROWN Act, legislation that prohibits discrimination against workers for wearing natural hairstyles. Additionally, our Commissioners testified in Annapolis in support of legislation addressing paid family and medical leave to care for new children and family members, as well as legislation prohibiting employers from requiring an applicant to furnish salary history as a condition of employment. We also were proud to host our 2nd Annual Lobby Day in Annapolis that included former Commissioners and other Commissions for Women from neighboring counties.

While we started the 2020 year with such a great momentum, our Commission, like the rest of the world, faced head-on the global pandemic of the COVID-19 virus and its collateral effects on residents in the county that included the housing crisis, economic impact, education and growing death tolls due to the coronavirus. Additionally, our nation was compelled to get a more intimate view of the racial unrest that exists in our country. With our country and our state forced into mandatory "stay-at-home" orders, it presented unprecedented challenges for Montgomery County.

Notwithstanding those challenges, I am most pleased that our Commission quickly refocused its priorities and adjusted to the current atmosphere. We were able to continue our monthly programs on a virtual platform which allowed us to engage with an even broader audience than ever before. Our programs continued to provide essential information to women in the county. We continued the Career Series that included resumé and interviewing skills to career coaching. We were able to host a financial literacy series in partnership with the county's library and the divorce and separation seminars, all on a virtual platform. Additionally, the Girl Power contest was able to continue to engage and showcase the tremendous talent within the county.

I could not be prouder of the work of our Commission and I am so thankful to the committed group of 15 Commissioners, our Executive Director and volunteers who work with us to implement our activities.

On behalf of the Montgomery County Commission for Women, I also want to thank our County Executive, Marc Elrich, and the entire County Council for their unwavering support of this Commission.

There is still much to be accomplished as we continuously fight for the rights of women but I am evermore optimistic that the Montgomery County Commission for Women remains ready for the task! It is truly a group effort and it is my honor to be part of serving the women of this county.



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S LETTER JODI FINKELSTEIN, MSW

In 1972, the Montgomery County Council passed a law establishing the Montgomery County Commission for Women. That law charges the Commission with the responsibility of advising the County Executive, the County Council, the public, and the agencies of the county, state and federal governments on the issues of concern to women.

The law provides that there will be 15 commissioners, county residents who are each appointed to three-year terms and serve without compensation. Nine of the commissioners must be endorsed by organizations concerned with women's issues and six must serve independently. The Commission meets in full once per month, and commissioners meet in committees in the interim to work on its projects and initiatives. On average, it is estimated that commissioners contribute about four hours each week working on behalf of Montgomery County's women and girls.

The Commission was created to advance women's equal and full participation in the benefits, responsibilities and opportunities of society. In achieving its mission, the Commission examines laws, policies, practices and procedures, identifies disparities that impact women and advocates remedies for those disparities. Over its nearly 50-year history, the Commission has undertaken successful and effective initiatives on issues such as educational equity, family equity in the courts, sexual harassment in the workplace, pay equity, workplace flexibility, violence in relationships including teens, immigrant women, domestic workers' rights, single mothers and poverty and much more.

The pages that follow highlight the work of the Commission in FY 20. Though this past year was certainly challenging, the Commission reaffirmed its commitment to fulfill its advocacy role of identifying inequities in policies and laws that would negatively impact women and girls. Although the office closed in March 2020, we continued to provide meaningful programs, and information and referrals to the community.

COMMISSION FOR WOMEN RESEARCH & EVALUATION COMMITTEE

2019-2020 ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY

CFW R&E Committee Members in 2019-2020: Mona-Lee Belizaire, Tiffany Boiman, Tonia Bui, Nicole Y. Drew, Esq., Adrienne Prentice, Diana Rubin, Tricia Swanson

CFW Strategic Planning and Goal Setting Effort: The Committee prepared documents that captured the outcomes of the strategic planning sessions conducted in June 2019 and August 2019. The documents were used to guide the CFW in selecting goals and its 4 priority areas for the 2019-2020 year.

- **Exploratory Letter for Disconnected Youth Task Force:** The Committee distributed a survey asking the Commissioners to vote on the Status of Women Report Recommendations to focus on in 2020, as aligned to the four priorities that were selected by the CFW. Top votes were for disconnected youth. In response, the Committee moved a motion to draft a joint exploratory letter to the County Executive and County Council to form/support a task force on disconnected youth, which was voted on in February 2020.
- **Approval of Gift Cards for Survey Responses:** The Committee revisited how to incentivize survey responses during the evening programs offered by CFW. The Committee voted to issue \$150 in gift cards for Starbucks, and everyone who filled in a survey after a seminar would be entered to win one. The CFW Budget Committee approved this request.
- **Review of Survey Implementation and Responses:** The Committee continued to assess whether electronic or paper surveys are more efficient and provide a higher response rate, particularly for the WLB. The CFW identified that the WLB electronic version of the survey yielded more responses for the event. Paper survey responses from CFW programming were gathered and evaluated at high level. A majority of the responses were positive.
- **2018 Status of Women Report:** In October 2019, the County Council invited the CFW to discuss the findings and recommendations of the CFW Status of Women report. However, the Council's clerk had to cancel the presentation because the council's agenda was too full. The CFW and the Council was unable to reschedule this meeting.

POLICY & LEGISLATION (PALS) COMMITTEE

Co-Chairs: Diana Rubin and Tiffany Boiman

Committee Members: Tazeen Ahmad, Nicole Y. Drew, Esq., Giulia McPherson

This year, the Policy and Legislative Committee decided to continue its robust roster of advocacy activities by hosting its second Annual Lobby Day for current and past Commissioners in February. The Lobby Day was co-hosted by five Commissions across the state, including Anne Arundel County, Baltimore County, Frederick County, Montgomery County and Prince George's County. A group of 11 current and past Commissioners lobbied Montgomery County legislators personally in Annapolis to express the Commission's strong desire to see its legislative priorities enacted. Lobby Day kicked off with an inspirational address by Delegate Charlotte Crutchfield.

The Commission decided to continue with the strategy of focusing on four legislative priorities. Similar to 2018, awareness was raised about issues in the community and encouraged advocacy by women and girls (and other interested citizens) in the community. Each of our priority bills was selected for conformity with the full Commission's priorities – women's economic empowerment, safety and security, health and women in leadership.

Specifically, for the issues we chose to make a strategic legislative priority, the CFW determined to:

- **Testify or Submit Testimony on Priority Bills:** Worked to ensure that a Commissioner provided testimony on behalf of the Commission in support of each of the priority bills, either in person or by providing written testimony.
- **Conduct Social Media Outreach to Increase Awareness and Action:** Twitter and Facebook was used to inform the community about the substance and progress of the priority issues and the Commission's positions on them.
- **Action Alerts:** Action Alerts were sent via e-newsletter which is distributed to more than 15,000 people. These alerts described the priority bills and the issues they address and actions that needed to be taken by the community to affect the legislative process. Alerts were coordinated with partner organizations to ensure the greatest impact.
- **Lobby in Person on Lobby Day:** Meetings with Montgomery County legislators were held to discuss bills on the Commission's legislative agenda. The second Lobby Day was held on February 19, 2020.

The top legislative priorities are included in the list below. **The Committee is pleased to report that three of the four bills legislative priorities became law during the session.**

HB 206/HB242: Criminal Procedure – Motion to Vacate Judgment – Human Trafficking (True Freedom Act of 2020)

This legislation is one of the three bills noted above passed into law this session. It allows the court to eliminate or "vacate" a criminal judgement against a victim of trafficking for crimes other than prostitution that he or she was forced to commit while being trafficked, such as drug offenses or possession of weapons. (Prostitution is already eligible for vacatur under current law.) The bill's purpose is to avoid re-victimizing those who have been trafficked by holding them criminally responsible for acts which they were forced to do. A criminal conviction makes it very difficult for a trafficking victim to move past what has happened because it makes it hard to get jobs and secure housing. This bill will also allow victims to heal from the trauma of trafficking and begin rebuilding their lives.

Commissioner McPherson testified before the House Judiciary Committee and the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee in support of the bill. (February 2020)

HB123/SB217: Labor and Employment – Wage History and Wage Range

This legislation was also passed during the 2020 session and prohibits employers from requiring applicants to furnish salary history as a condition of employment. It also requires employers to provide salary ranges for positions if requested by applicants.

Commissioner Boiman testified before the House of Delegates Economic Matters Committee hearing in February of 2020.

HB233/SB212: Criminal Law – Assault in the First Degree – Suffocation or Strangulation

This legislation became law during the session. It aimed to decrease the risk of femicide by re-designating intentional suffocation and strangulation from Assault in the Second Degree to Assault in the First Degree.

Commissioner Ahmad testified before the House Judiciary Committee and the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee in January 2020.

POLICY & LEGISLATION (PAL) COMMITTEE

HB 839--Labor And Employment--Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program--Established (Time to Care Act)

The Family Leave Insurance (FAMLI) fund to provide partial wage replacement through which employees may take up to 12 weeks of paid leave from their jobs to care for new children, other family members with serious health conditions or disabilities, or themselves. The leave would be funded through an insurance pool to which workers and their employers contribute.

Commissioner Rubin submitted written testimony before the House Economic Committee and Senate Committee Finance Committee in February 2020.

County-Level Advocacy

In addition to state-level legislation, the Commission also supported relevant bills introduced at the county level. Commission President Drew testified in support of Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair (CROWN) Act, legislation that prohibits discrimination against workers for wearing their natural hair. That legislation became law in February of 2020.



CROWN ACT PRESS CONFERENCE



PRESIDENT NICOLE Y. DREW, ESQ., TESTIFYING BEFORE THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL ON THE CROWN ACT.

2019 LOBBY DAY



COMMISSIONER MONA-LEE BELIZAIRE



COMMISSIONERS TAZEEN AHMAD AND DONNA ROJAS



DELEGATE CHARLOTTE CRUTCHFIELD (LEFT OF SIGN) JOINS CURRENT AND FORMER COMMISSIONERS AT LOBBY DAY.

40TH ANNIVERSARY WOMEN'S LEGISLATIVE BRIEFING

Co-Chairs: Donna Rojas and Tazeen Ahmad

Committee Members: Tonia Bui, Patti Maclay, Nicole Y. Drew, Esq., and Mona-Lee Belizaire

The 40th anniversary of the Women's Legislative Briefing (WLB) took place on January 26, 2020 at the Universities of Shady Grove. The theme was, "Women's Voices and Votes Count." The keynote speaker was Barbara Harrison, former NBC4 reporter and commentator. The WLB focused on the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage and the critical role women play in voting. Breakout sessions included: (1) Safety and Justice for Women, Part 1 and 2, (2) Women in Leadership—Breaking New Ground, (3) Health Care for Women, (4) Women and Voting (5) Economic Justice for Women, (6) Justice Involved Women, and (7) Racial Equity and the 2020 Census. The Emerging Leaders section ran concurrently and focused on (1) Making Your Voices Heard and (2) Pathways to Leadership.



WLB OPENING PLENARY SESSION



KAISER PERMANENTE, AMETHYST SPONSOR



KEYNOTE SPEAKER,
BARBARA HARRISON



COUNTY EXECUTIVE
MARC ELRICH

2020 WOMEN'S LEGISLATIVE BRIEFING



WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PANEL



PRESIDENT NICOLE Y. DREW , ESQ. AND
WLB-CO-CHAIR DONNA ROJAS
PROMOTING THE WLB ON "GOOD
MORNING WASHINGTON"



Safety and Justice for Women Breakout Panel

PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE

Chair: Ijeoma Enendu

Members: Donna Rojas, Patti Maclay, and Nicole Y. Drew, Esq.

The programming committee built on the successes from previous years to provide free or low-cost seminars to the community. In March of 2020, the committee worked hard to determine how to provide seminars to the community despite COVID-19. Seminars scheduled in March and April were cancelled but were then offered online with the help of Montgomery County Public Libraries. The first online class sponsored by the Commission was Financial Health and Wellness in conjunction with Rockville Library.

Separation and Divorce: What Do I Need to Know?

The Commission once again partnered with the Montgomery County Bar Association, Family Law section to provide free seminars on the "ins" and "outs" of going through a separation and divorce in Maryland. Participants learned about the Methods of Dispute Resolution, When and Where to File, Types of Divorce and Grounds, Financial Statements, Alimony, Property and Equitable Distribution, Role of the Attorney, and Domestic Violence/Orders of Protection. Seminars were held the first Tuesday of every month from 7-8:30pm. Seminars in April, May and June were virtual.

Introductory Self-Defense Seminar

This two-hour introductory self-defense seminar provided teen & adult women of all fitness levels with information that may reduce their risk of exposure to violence and introduced them to the physical aspects of self-defense. Classes were held On September 17 and 24, October 4 and 9, November 6, 21, and 26, and December 10 and 17, 2020.

Financial Health and Wellness

The Montgomery County Public Libraries partnered with the Commission to offer a series of financial seminars that walked participants through the ins and outs of "all things" money. The seminars were led by Jamie Lapin, owner of Risk Management Group, LLC. Topics included Financial Planning 101, Planning for Retirement, Social Security and Medicare, and Divorce and Money. Sessions were held on October 15, 22, 29, and November 12.

R.A.D. Basic Self-Defense for Women: 6-week Program

This 12-hour, six-week course begins with risk awareness and reduction strategies, then progresses to the basics of realistic hands-on self-defense skills and culminates in an optional simulation in which participants may suit up in protective body gear and practice their new skills in a safe training environment. Two, 6-week programs were offered in October and January, 2019.

Career Series

Throughout this series, participants heard from human resource professionals on topics including: crafting the perfect resume, networking tips, creating your own elevator pitch, interview best practices, dressing for the workforce, and wage negotiation. This series was held virtually on: June 9, 2020: Creating Your Best Resume, June 16, 2020: Networking Tips & Elevator Pitches, June 30, 2020: Negotiating Your Pay, and July 7, 2020: Career Coaching.

In addition to sponsoring seminars, the Programming Committee worked with Commissioners to ensure the Commission was "out and about" in the community. Commissioners participated in numerous community events including National Night Out, Women's Equality Day, the Power Conference, the Montgomery College Single Parent Conference, and a community health and wellness fair.

PROGRAMMING: COMMISSIONERS IN THE COMMUNITY



EQUALITY DAY CELEBRATION



SHERIFF DAREN POPKIN,
COMMISSIONER IJEOMA ENENDU
AND HER DAUGHTER AT NATIONAL
NIGHT OUT



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JODI
FINKELSTEIN AND COMMISSIONER
PATTI MACLAY AT THE SINGLE
PARENT CONFERENCE



PRESIDENT NICOLE Y. DREW, ESQ AT
THE POWER CONFERENCE



COMMISSIONERS TONIA BUI AND
ANGELA WHITEHEAD QUIGLEY AT A
COMMUNITY HEALTH FAIR

THE COMMISSION FOR WOMEN AND COVID-19

In March 2020 the nation and world were stunned by the spread of an unknown virus called COVID-19. Montgomery County was no exception, as its first case was reported in early March 2020. To reduce the spread of COVID-19, the county closed schools, non-essential businesses, mandated that all employees who can work from home should work from home and asked every citizen to stay home. The state of Maryland was in a state of emergency—life completely changed for everyone. Despite these challenges, the Commission for Women continued to carry out its mission and accomplished the following:

1. All programs were moved online.
2. Though walk-in services were no longer available, information and referrals were still provided via phone and email.
3. The weekly newsletter content included state and county announcements related to COVID-19, such as health and safety information, food resources, employment information, volunteer information, transportation information, and other critical resources for women and families.
4. Commission meetings were held online and remained open to the public.

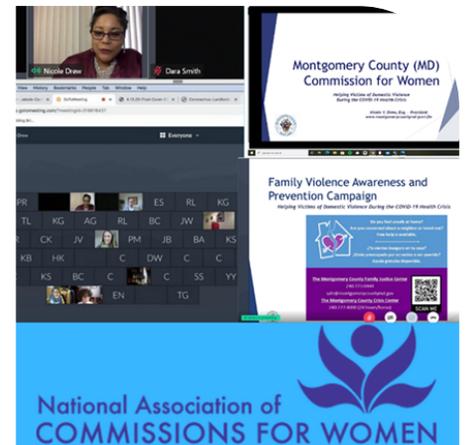
Domestic Violence Campaign

In conjunction with the Montgomery County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DVCC), the Commission assisted with a county-wide domestic violence awareness campaign that launched in April 2020. The goal of the campaign was to assure victims of domestic violence that help was still available despite COVID-19 restrictions. Coordination of this campaign happened exceptionally quickly and was well organized.

The campaign kicked off with an online press conference featuring a domestic violence survivor, numerous elected officials, the Commission, and various representatives from county departments.

In addition to the online press conference, the Commission and DVCC worked to ensure that grocery stores, county/community food distribution centers and other critical places carried awareness cards about domestic violence resources. Between April 23, 2020 and June 30, 2020 87,200 cards were distributed. A version of the awareness card was also made into a sticker and posted at each cashier checkout counter at all Montgomery County Liquor and Wine stores, and the stores included a short message on all purchase receipts. Facebook and Twitter ads were also created and ran on the social media platforms from April 28, 2020 to May 31, 2020. The ads targeted people who live in Montgomery County and linked back to the Montgomery County Family Justice Center website, which includes more detailed resources on domestic violence, child abuse and elder abuse. The Facebook ad was shown 242,056 times, which resulted in 1,255 link clicks to the Montgomery County Family Justice Center website. The Twitter ad was shown 176,894 times. The image was also shared with all partner agencies to promote on their own social media platforms.

On May 7, 2020 President Nicole Y. Drew, Esq., discussed the campaign and the Commission's role in an online conference sponsored by the National Associations of Commissions for Women. The conference was entitled, "Women's Commissions and their Response to COVID-19."



**PRESIDENT NICOLE Y. DREW, ESQ.,
PRESENTS TO THE NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION OF COMMISSION FOR
WOMEN ON THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
CAMPAIGN**

EMERGING LEADERS COMMITTEE



EMERGING LEADERS SPEAKER
JESSICA HOLLOWAY

Chair: Mona-Lee Belizaire

Members: Angela Whitehead Quigley, Meredith Weisel

The Emerging Leaders Committee once again organized the Emerging Leaders track at the 40th annual Women's Legislative Briefing.

The track catered to students in 6th-12th grade and included two topics: (1) Making Your Voices Heard and (2) Pathways to Leadership.

Jessica Holloway, youth representatives, provided remarks on behalf of Emerging Leaders during the opening plenary.

Girl Power Contest

The Girl Power Contest was originally slated for March 1, 2020 – March 31, 2020. The contest was postponed and moved to August, 2020 because of COVID-19.

The question was:
As we commemorate the 100th anniversary of women's right to vote, what barriers still exist for women and girls and how can you break them?

POSTPONED

100th Annual Women's History Month
2020 Girl Power Contest

Submit a short story, a poem, a drawing (or whatever else you can think of) to answer:

we commemorate the 100th anniversary of women's right to vote, what barriers do you think still exist for women and girls and how can you help to break them?

- Win a swag bag and bragging rights!
- Open to Montgomery County residents, age 5 to 105
- <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cfw/>
- Contest runs March 1-March 31

Montgomery County Commission for Women | friends LIBRARY MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MD | MC PL Montgomery County PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Contest extended through June 26
Awards announced in August

PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Chair: Isabel Argoti

Members: Diana Rubin, Ijeoma Enendu, Patti Maclay, Nicole Y. Drew, Esq.

The public relations committee continued to publicize Commission for Women events, programs, and overall activities of the commission on social media. To create a holistic approach to promotion, the committee created a social media content calendar. The calendar is populated with various monthly commemorations, events, and other items to promote.

The PR Committee also worked with the county to promote information about COVID-19. Information was shared on all the Commission's social media platforms, including the weekly newsletter.

The logo for the Montgomery County Commission for Women features the organization's name in a serif font. "Montgomery County" is in a standard weight, while "Commission for Women" is in a larger, more decorative script. The text is white and set against a solid blue rectangular background.

www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cfw

Advancing Women's Rights in Montgomery County Since 1972

News You Can Use

March 13, 2020

Montgomery County Announces Closures and Updates Connected to COVID-19

The Commission's first COVID newsletter. The Commission continued to share important information throughout the duration of COVID-19.

STEM SCHOLARSHIPS

Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Scholarship

Liaison Members: Patti Maclay and Isabel Argoti

The Commission, in conjunction with the Montgomery College Foundation created a scholarship to support students pursuing careers STEM fields in Fall 2015. The \$10,500 endowment, funded by individual gifts, supports current Montgomery College students now and in the future.

Eligible students may apply for a \$500 scholarship. As the endowment matures, future students will receive scholarship awards through the interest earned on the endowment.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Academic Year Scholarship Awarded</u>
1. Jana Christina Catuche	2015-2016
2. Mansura Dansani	2017-2018
3. Awai Atchade	2018-2019
4. Vivian Cid	2019-2020